[8]

787
177

All of the methods currently used in the different regions of Senegal to promote dreaming bear traces of the influence of Moslem beliefs, often distorted by local superstitions.

For centuries the work of Mohamed Ibn-Sirina (died in 110 A.H.), an Arab scholar of old regarded as the foremost of [791] the great mou'abbirs (interpreters of dreams) in the whole Moslem world, has served as the basis for this science. This work, supplied with few examples, brings together the most common types of interpretations and establishes universal rules that are still valid today.

Later, another Arab scholar (Cheïka Abdoul Khaniyou of Nabili Chiyou) revised and completed the work of Ibn Sirina; he collected and classified the various dreams in logical categories according to their subject (things, animals, persons, supernatural beings ...) in an important work: Taatire El-Ana mbitâbir El-Manam (= To make the world happier by the interpretation of dreams). Subsequently, Eddemiri in his great work entitled Hayatou el-Hayaouan (in two volumes) has given precise and exhaustive interpretations concerning the dreams in which animals figure.

[791] These are the two sources of classical information most often utilized by the interpreters of Senegalese dreams. The traditional religion, however, continues to exert an indisputable influence upon them.

Some of the practices that we are going to point out [9] by means of examples show this same influence. Utilized to evoke dreams, one finds them throughout Senegal.

Place: It is always essential that the place where one lies down is the most suitable one possible. In a place where a Moslem may not pray, one cannot hope to have a dream.

In the canton of Kahône (Bas-Saloum [Lower Saloum]), a region little Islamized, the women go at night to lie down near the ancient tombs.

The Ouolof [Wolof] of Cayor, with the same aim, visit [778] the tomb of the great marabout El Hadj Malick Sy at Tivaouane; the people of Baol go to the one of Sérigne Amadou Bamba M'Backé at Touba in the region north of Diourbel.

[9 cont.]

787 805 Time: Certain hours are favorable for the birth of dreams -- especially those when silence is deepest, that is to say, from midnight to early morning and the hour of the siesta (when it is customary to have one).

Among all the months of the year, the month of Nisân (April) is the most propitious, according to a universal belief.

787 788 Texts to quote: In order to evoke a favorable dream, it is recommended that, before lying down, one quote verses from the Koran, which differ greatly according to the method used; [779] those of the first holy book, the Fâtiha, are most preferred for this practice. The Souratou el Ikhâssi ("qhoul houe Allahou ahadoun" = There is only one God) is most frequently used, and one must say it seven times.

There are others (for example, "Astâgh firou Allah!" = May God forgive me!) which one must say 100 times.

[776] The nine names of God (El Djabar = The Almighty, El Moukatabir = The Proud One, El Amad = The Eternal One, El Bâtin = The Hidden One, El Kâdir = The Mighty One, El Madjîd = The Illustrious One, El Bourkhân = The Miracle, El Mouktadir = The One for Whom Anything Is Possible, El Rahman = The Merciful) must be repeated 21 times before sleeping.

Various practices: In order to promote favorable dreams, as well as to drive away bad dreams, one observes various rules which differ only in details.

[783] Thus, to execute the practice of listikhâra, one must make his ablutions (following a rigorously prescribed order) and then [782] his evening prayer. During each rakaa (1), one must say eleven

1. Phase of the prayer which involves: 1 standing position; 1 bowing position, the hands on the knees; 2 prostrate positions, the forehead against the ground; 1 seated position.

times (or more, according to the method followed) the verses of Fâtiha and other quotations from the Koran.

[9 cont.]

787 After having recited the required prayers, one expresses his particular desire in a whisper while shielding the mouth with the right hand.

Then one lies down in a quiet and suitable place, on the right side, placing the right hand under the ear.

787 278 [791] Drugs and substances: Many drugs are provided for facilitating dreaming, sometimes by the mou'abbirs (who are relatively very rare in Senegal) and sometimes by other experienced persons.

The use of the roots of bakis or of sindièngne (a kind of creeping plant common in the western part of Senegal) is very widespread; if one falls asleep with a toothpick of bakis or sindièngne in his mouth, he will have frightful visions in which demons, the dead, and supernatural beings appear.

The same result is obtained if, before lying down, one takes a solution of salted water in which roots of sindièngne have fermented for quite a long time, the effect of which is both purgative and stimulative.

[308] Among other substances, the extract called kaoulâne (sometimes used in the form of a lotion for the face), liquid myrrh, opium, etc. should be mentioned.

787 [782] More rarely, fumigation is practiced in a sealed and isolated hut, in which honey or incense is burned. Obviously, in this case, the procedure may be completed by one of the above practices.

[778] [789] Magical means: Throughout Senegal (as is well-known) one finds an enormous number of talismans (for example, the khâtim, magical designs made up of names, characters, and figures which possess a kind of supernatural power), the aim of which is to evoke favorable dreams; their form varies according to the desire that the believer wants to realize.

Bohumil Holas

(Ifan, Dakar)